
It's time to change how we view a child's growth.

***Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)
“Learn the Signs. Act Early.” Campaign***

Health Care Professional Resource Distribution Kit



**www.cdc.gov/actearly
1-800-CDC-INFO**



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

About This Kit

The health care professional community – pediatricians, family physicians, nurses, physician’s assistants, nurse practitioners, speech therapists, audiologists, public health officials, and many others – is perhaps one of the most important targets for the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” campaign. It is this group that parents often turn to first with concerns about their child’s development – and it is this group that can make the most difference in the early identification of developmental delays.

In order to increase early identification and action, we must work with health care professionals to break through the clutter of information they receive on a daily basis. Health care professionals, particularly professionals treating children, are barraged with messages about what they should be telling their patients’ families. The truth is, there are hundreds of important issues: convincing parents to use car seats correctly and putting children on their backs to sleep, eliminating reliance on antibiotics to treat non-bacterial infections, and many more. There is rarely enough time in any given examination to cover all of the critical issues of health, development, safety, and prevention. But health care professionals themselves have reported in research that they wish they knew more about how to talk to parents about realistic and reliable ways to check on children’s developmental progress. Some of them also said they didn’t realize how much an early identification and treatment of a problem can benefit a child.

You know how important it is for professionals to pay attention to all of the areas of development; in this kit we want to talk about how you can most effectively share this knowledge with health care professionals in your community.

During the week of April 18 – 22, 2005, we are encouraging campaign champions across the country to visit their local health care professionals to tell them about free educational resources for parents on childhood development. And we need your enthusiasm and passion to make sure health professionals incorporate these resource materials into every patient visit!

In this kit, you will find:

- Key campaign messages to help you communicate the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” campaign to health care professionals in your local community.
- A step-by-step guide on how to reach out to health care professionals, from whom to call to detailed information on what to say. The entire process is easy and effective!
- Suggestions for successful outreach.

Key Campaign Messages

Most parents don't know everything they should about developmental milestones. They don't know when a child should be making eye contact, when a child should recognize and interact with objects, when a child should begin imitating words or actions. They simply don't have the basic information that would allow them to recognize the signs of an emerging developmental disorder – that would then empower them to seek help from a health care professional. With the materials like the resource kits, health care professionals can help educate parents about developmental milestones. The following bullets are the core messages of the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” campaign.

About CDC's “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” Campaign

- CDC's “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” campaign aims to help parents of young children identify possible developmental delays and to encourage them to discuss concerns with their child's health care professional.
- This campaign targets parents, child health care professionals, and childcare providers in an effort to identify and get help for developmental delays in children early on.
- To learn more about the campaign and developmental milestones, visit the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” Web site at www.cdc.gov/actearly or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Health Care Professional Messages

- **Message One:** Autism can often be diagnosed at 18 months or younger. This is the core of the “Act Early” component of the campaign. Many professionals wait until a child is two, three or even four years old to see if a child will grow out of a developmental delay. They SHOULD NOT wait. As soon as they see warning signs and suspect a potential delay, they should refer the child for additional testing and appropriate treatment. You may need to compare the drawback of a “false positive” -- referring to a child who would, in fact, grow out of it in time -- to the drawback of a “false negative” -- a child who loses precious time of developmental intervention, and may be permanently affected.
- **Message Two:** The materials are designed to fit in with current office procedures. Many professionals currently have posters and informational materials in their examination and waiting rooms. They also typically give their patients fact sheets to read at home. The materials in the Health Care Professional Resource Kit easily fit into their practices.
- **Message Three:** The materials focus on increasing awareness and education among parents and increasing the conversation among parents and professionals about a child's development. The health care professional knows about milestones and warning signs in general. The parent knows what their child can and cannot do, even though they may not be aware that they are seeing developmental milestones or “red flags.” The campaign materials are designed to make sure that both parties (professional and parent) are working together to share their knowledge about a particular child's development.
- **Message Four:** Err on the side of safety. We have heard from parents and health care professionals alike that professionals frequently adopt a wait-and-see approach when they suspect a developmental delay. Many doctors have expressed that they do not want to

unnecessarily concern parents and would prefer to wait until they themselves are sure. This approach could result in missed opportunities for a child with a delay to receive services that could minimize the impact of a developmental disability. Early recognition and treatment is so important for these children. It is better to get a referral for testing if a delay is suspected than waiting to have suspicions confirmed and missing months of needed care.

Step-by-Step Health Care Professional Outreach Guide

- **Step 1:**
PLAN

It is best to start with the professionals you know. You have a relationship with your current health care professionals. Even if your familiar doctors have been great about sharing information with you, don't overlook them as an audience. They may be looking for new, updated materials and information to share with parents. Encourage them to share the information and Web site with their colleagues. Other ways to reach health care professionals in your community:

 - Speak to your friends and neighbors about the campaign. Would they be willing to talk to take a set of materials to their children's health care professionals?
 - Identify other professionals in your community: from large facilities with group practices to mom-and-pop professionals where one spouse is a physician and the other is the receptionist, billing agent, scheduler, office manager, and nurse.

- **Step 2:**
CALL

Call the health care professional's office and ask to speak with the office manager or front desk personnel. Do NOT ask for a health care professional.

- **Step 3:**
INFORM & INVITE

Here's an example of what you might say:

"Hello, my name is _____ and I am with [insert name of voluntary/advocacy organization]. May I speak with the Office Manager? I am distributing information from CDC's new early childhood campaign called "Learn the Signs. Act Early." This campaign aims to teach parents of young children about developmental milestones and encourages them to talk to their child's health care professional if they have concerns or questions. CDC has created a free tool kit to assist professionals when parents voice these concerns. When can I schedule a few minutes to come in, go over the materials and let you know what new items are available to you for free?"

[If answer is no, ask if you can order or leave a set of the materials for them to review at a later date.]

Thank you for your time! If you have any questions about the campaign, please visit CDC's Web site at www.cdc.gov/actearly. If you would like additional information about [insert name of voluntary/advocacy organization], please feel free to contact me at [insert phone number]."

• **Step 4:**
*PROVIDE
INFO &
PRESENT
KITS*

As you prepare for your visit with the front desk personnel or office manager in the health care professional's office, take with you the items CDC sent: a sample health care professional resource kit, parent resource kit, flyer, and business card. Once you've arrived, explain who you are and what you are doing [see above script]. Use some of the key messages outlined in this kit to explain the campaign. Open your sample kits and describe each of the materials and their uses. Tell the individual there are many ways to get one these free resource kits:

1. If you've brought kits with you, offer to leave one with the individual.
2. Encourage the individual to call 1-800-CDC-INFO or go to the campaign Web site www.cdc.gov/actearly. Materials are available for downloading and ordering on the Web site. Provide the individual with instructions on downloading and ordering:
 - To download materials click on "Download Materials" under the Resources section on the left-hand side of the page and follow instructions.
 - To order materials, click on "Order Materials" under the Resources section on the left-hand side of the page and follow instructions.
3. Give the individual one of the business cards or the flyer with the Web site address and telephone number.
4. Offer to order the kits for the office. Be sure to write down appropriate address, number and type of kits.

Thank them for their time and tell them if they have any questions about the campaign to please visit CDC's Web site at www.cdc.gov/actearly.

• **Step 4:**
*FOLLOW
UP &
THANK
YOU*

Follow up with your contact at the doctor's office in a week or so to ask if they've ordered materials or have any further questions about the campaign. Thank them for getting this important message to parents in your community.

Outreach Suggestions

The health care professional community is a critical audience for this campaign, and there is no one better to reach them than you – a concerned citizen of their community. So, whether you talk to one provider or 100, do not underestimate the importance of your voice. Each time you talk to a health care professional – and share the campaign materials – you are helping them to better serve the children of your community. Your actions do make a difference.

Here are just a few things you should remember:

- Talk to your child's health care professional first – take a packet with you on your next visit. Ask them to identify additional professionals in the community with whom you should share the campaign materials.
- Talk to your friends and neighbors about the campaign – ask if they would be interested in bringing a packet of materials to their professional or put you in contact with their professional.
- Contact your local early intervention program – find out who in the area does regular referrals to them. Then reach out to those professionals as a way to begin to network; ask them for names of other professionals in the area whom you should contact.
- Before your talk to a health care professional, make sure that you are comfortable talking about the key messages of the campaign.
- Schedule appointments to meet with your identified health care professionals – be prepared with a packet to leave with them and include a note (in case you have to leave the materials without getting to see them personally).
- Explore ways to reach the health care professional community more broadly – beyond one-on-one meetings. For example, is there a local chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics in your area that you could reach out to, or perhaps a medical school?
- Identify existing communication channels through which local health care professionals get information – like a medical society newsletter – and work to get information shared in them about the campaign.
- If your contact requests that you order the kit for their office, you can either call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/actearly. If ordering online, click on “Order Materials” under the Resources section on the left-hand side of the page and follow instructions. The kits should arrive within two to three weeks.